

The INQUIRER

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The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

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The Inquirer is the oldest
Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
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Inquiring Words

Prayer for Remembrance

Remember Them

They have lived their lives in service.

They have left their loved ones.

They have secured our freedom.

They have been hated and despised.

They have lost lives in service.

They have been left fragile and broken.

They have maintained our peace.

They have been cheered and honoured.

They are our brothers and sisters.

They are our sons and daughters.

They are our mothers and fathers.

They are not forgotten.

They will never be forgotten.

They are remembered.

Amen.

— Peter Teets

Photo by Bas van de Wiel

Faith in Words

Please contribute to the Christmas double-issue of *The Inquirer*. Meditations, prayers and sermons may be submitted by e-mail or post.

E-mail and postal addresses are listed on the left of this page.

Send stories, sermons, prayers or meditations having to do with Christmas, Chanukah, winter, Solstice or similar themes.

Submissions from children are especially encouraged.

Or, if you have heard something at a service which inspired you, encourage the worship leader to contribute. Submissions are due by 16 November.

Feeling Ambivalent yet grateful for war



Neville Chamberlain holding the paper containing the resolution to commit to peaceful methods signed by both Hitler and himself on his return from Munich. He is showing the piece of paper to a crowd at Heston Aerodrome on 30 September 1938. Photo by Ministry of Information official photographer

By Yvonne Aburrow

War, when you look at it, is a very strange cultural phenomenon. Vast amounts of men and machines are pitted against each other, and it is not moral superiority that ensures victory, but superior tactics and technology. It is odd that the outcome is determined by tactics and technology rather than by who is actually right. One might as well determine the outcome by having politicians engage in single combat in a large stadium, as it would save an awful lot of lives and resources.

Of course faith in the rightness of the cause motivates the combatants, and we would like to think that those who are fighting for the morally superior side actually have a stronger motivation – because they are motivated by love of justice and freedom and humanity, rather than by anger towards a minority, or fear of retribution by their commanders. These ideas hold up reasonably well for the Second World War, because it was fairly obvious that Nazism must be defeated. But America was still racially segregated when it was busy fighting the Nazis, and many people in Britain flirted with far right politics during the Great Depression, so there must have been people fighting the Nazis who supported segregation and right-wing politics, or who were just fighting for nationalistic reasons.

The idea that faith in the rightness of the cause determined the outcome of the First World War does not hold up so well, though, because it was the last great war of imperialism, and both sides had made alliances and grabbed territory, and were squabbling over who should have the most land.

I also find it deeply disturbing that if the reparations imposed on Germany after the First World War had not been so punitive, then the Great Depression would not have had such a huge impact on the German economy, and the Nazis might never have got into power. If only the victors of the First World War

had read Lao Tsu's warning to leaders victorious in wars. He said, "Treat victory like a funeral" – in other words, don't gloat over your defeated enemy and demand revenge, but treat them well and kindly so that they won't want to fight you again.

Lao Tsu's work, written in the 6th century BCE, is partly intended as a treatise on statecraft, and its ideas are still applicable today.

One politician who might well have been applying similar principles was the much-maligned Neville Chamberlain. Chamberlain was a Unitarian, and related to a long-standing Unitarian family. He did everything he could to prevent war (as is well known), but he also built up Britain's armaments in case war turned out to be inevitable (something that is not so well-known). It was a very practical and balanced approach to the politics of the day.

My own attitude to war is fairly ambivalent. I admire the heroism of warriors, and the camaraderie of regiments, and their colourful and stirring traditions. I admire the craftsmanship and technology that goes into making weapons such as swords, bows and arrows, castles and siege engines. I find people's personal war stories absolutely fascinating, and never tire of listening to them. On the other hand, I abhor the bloodshed and violence, the blind fury of battle, the slaughter of men, the terrible waste of humanity and talent that is involved, and the sorrow of bereavement on such a vast scale, and the tragedy of the physically maimed and psychologically scarred men that return from war. I often think of Wilfred Owen, who was killed in the last week of the First World War. His mother received the telegram informing her of his death as the church bells announcing the Armistice were ringing out over the Shropshire hills.

(Continued on next page)

Harder to fight for peace than war



Students drop poppies into the water at 'Silence in the Square', 2011. Photo, courtesy of the British Legion, by Peter Luckhurst

(Continued from previous page)

And yet, and yet, I am grateful that imperialism and Nazism and other horrors were defeated so that we can live in freedom now. I wear a red poppy in memory of those who gave their lives for our freedom, and a white poppy in the hope that one day no-one will ever have to make that sacrifice again.

One striking thing about the experience of war is that people never seem to feel so alive as when death is so close to them. People lived more intensely and vividly, as if the saying "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" was never far from their minds. If you have ever read the novels of Mary Wesley, you will be aware of how intensely life was lived during the war – lovers did not know if they would ever see each other again, and so they gave their all. There *was* camaraderie and a sense of common humanity during the Blitz – although, as someone who lived through that period pointed out to me, there were also a lot of people making a fast buck on the black market and exploiting others.

On the other hand, there are wonderful stories like the Christmas Truce of 1914, and the friendship of JRR Tolkien with his batman in the trenches, which he recreated in literary form in the relationship of Frodo and Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* – and it is very clear that Frodo would not have succeeded in his quest if it were not for the support of his friend Sam.

I think, however, that what is happening here is the beauty and compassion of humanity asserting itself in spite of the horrors of war, not because of them. Tolkien was one of a group of four close friends at grammar school, and he was the only one to survive the First World War.

If only the heroism and the craftsmanship of war could be channelled towards peaceful ends. If only the world were a more just and equitable place, where resources were fairly distributed and nobody thought they needed to fight for territory, or try to wipe out people who are different. It's possible to create camaraderie and fellow-feeling by digging a fire-pit for a weekend camp – there's no need to go to war to create it. Imagine a world without war. Instead of money being spent on guns and tanks and fighter planes, it would be spent on improving the lives of ordinary people. There's a well-known feminist poster that says, imagine if the army had to

hold jumble sales to raise money for weapons, and healthcare was properly funded. It's true, there is something wrong with a world where wars are automatically funded, but hospitals have to fund-raise for essential equipment.

The Quakers talk about the seeds of war. There are ideas and practices prevalent in our society that make war more likely, make it seem inevitable, even. The way boys are discouraged from showing emotion, and encouraged to regard women as objects, so that they could one day be soldiers. The way our taxes go to fund the army and the maintenance of weapons, whether we want them to or not. The way that our industry is geared towards the manufacture and distribution of weapons of war. The way that social inequality is maintained, one result of which is that the army seems like a good career for a working-class lad.

If there are seeds of war, there must also be seeds of peace – seeds that we can plant. There are practices like non-violent communication, meditation, contemplation, community-building, diplomacy, interfaith dialogue, living sustainably, volunteering overseas, all of which promote an understanding of other people and cultures, promote dialogue rather than violence, and contribute towards the creation of a just and peaceful world.

But there can be no peace until there is social and environmental justice. Until resources are fairly distributed, there will always be people trying to grab land and resources, or people trying to prevent others from getting them. I am pretty sure that both the Gulf Wars and the Falklands War were about oil, and the reason that no-one has bothered to liberate Tibet from the Chinese is because it has no natural resources worth exploiting, and because China is a major creditor and trading partner of Western countries.

Let us, therefore, seek out and plant the seeds of peace. Let us seek to see things from other people's point of view. Let us promote interfaith dialogue, non-violent communication and social and environmental justice. And let us practice peace in our own lives, as I know many of you are already doing. For as AJ Muste once said, "There is no way to peace: peace is the way".

Yvonne Aburrow is a member of the congregation at Oxford.

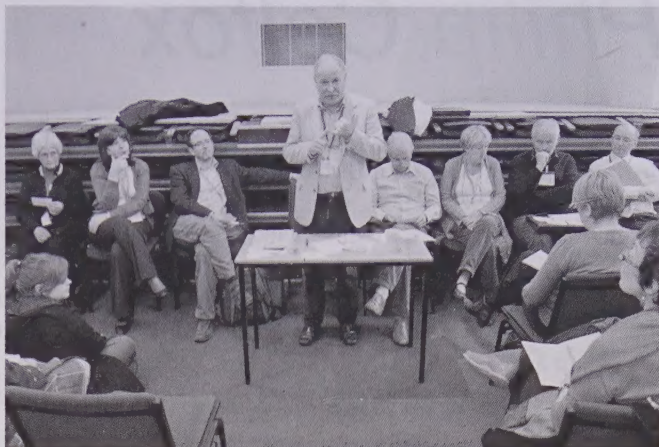
Electing a new Executive Committee

The period for receipt of nominations has now closed. Popularis Ltd have confirmed that the following seven candidates have been validly nominated and that an election will take place for the five positions available on the Executive Committee.

- James Barry: Ditchling Unitarians
- Philip Colfox: Bridport Chapel in the Garden
- Joan Cook: St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh
- David E Gillman: Coventry Great Meeting House
- Robert Ince: Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield
- Louise Rogers: Newcastle-under-Lyme Meeting House community
- Jacqueline Woodman: Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society

Each Congregation was sent a supply of blank voting papers on 5 November in accordance with the number of quota-paying members in that Congregation for the financial year 2010/11. Separate arrangements are being made to cover voting by full and associate members. A booklet giving a profile of each candidate will also be included with each ballot, together with a pre-paid response envelope. These will be sent by Popularis Ltd of 6 De Montfort Mews Leicester LE1 7EU, the company appointed by the GA to run the election. If anyone requires a large print booklet of the candidate profiles, please call Unitarian Headquarters on 020 7240 2384

The voting period begins on 12 November and ends on 14



Members of the Executive Committee participated in a workshop at the 2012 General Assembly meetings. (l-r)

Alison Thursfield, Cathie Masztalerz, the Rev Andy Pakula (since resigned), the Rev Martin Whitell (Convenor), Robert Ince (Acting Hon Treasurer), Joan Cook, the Rev David Usher, along with GA Chief Officer Derek McAuley. Photo by Giles Croucher

December. It is expected that the results will be available on 17th December 2012.

*– Jill Hudson, Wade Miller-Knight and Howard Wilkins
Electoral Panel*

EC Candidates

James Barry

Age: 52

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: Ditchling Unitarians

How long have you been a Unitarian? 18 years

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

I feel I have the commitment, energy, skills and experience to assist a new team to improve our governance. It's been very frustrating watching from the sidelines.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

I've run a business for 20 years, always preparing the accounts. I have worked at Essex Hall, served on 8 Unitarian committees and over 12 others, including chairing a national computer-user group. I ensured that it was democratic, something we don't do and why many feel disenfranchised and de-motivated.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

Good managers make positive things happen and this inspires an organisation. I am proud of my track record of achievement and keen to contribute to our leadership. Rightly, the EC will always be judged on results. Improve these and the perception will change.

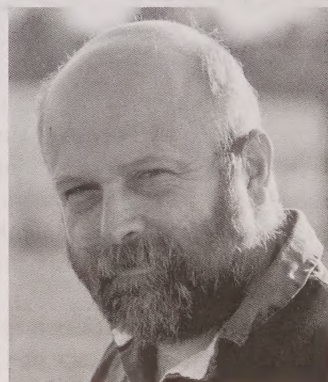
What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

Many of our working practices are very out of date with technology under-used. Using resources more efficiently and cutting the waste I have seen would reduce costs. Inspiring members with innovative and exciting initiatives is how you increase live giving. Many paid tasks could be done by enthused volunteers.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement?

I hope the people elected have the skill-sets needed to create an EC good enough to gain the trust required to engage and motivate us all. It's easier for respected leaders to be more open. Poor communication often leads to mistrust and suspicion, whether or not it hides incompetence.

Describe yourself in one word: Motivated



James Barry

EC Candidates

Philip Colfox

Age: 49

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: Bridport Unitarian Chapel in the Garden

How long have you been a Unitarian?

All my life. Started attending regularly 4 years ago. My family built the chapel 200 years ago and my father kept the spirit alive within me during his generation when we did not attend the chapel.

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

Unitarianism is too good to allow it to wither in chapels up and down the land. Helping establish it as the default UK way of life would be great.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

Reviving Bridport. Up to over 100 people at the multi-faith carol service within a year. My particular strength is the use of the strategic alliance model for rapid expansion. I have a track record of doing this in other fields as well.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

I could not change perceptions on my own. As an Executive Committee, our job would be collectively to discover, give permission, encourage and inspire all the resources that around us we already.

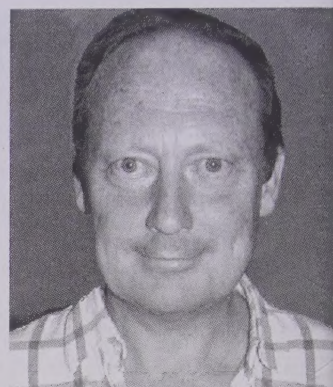
What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

By revitalising the membership and moving forward and expanding, the money will take care of itself. The more the strategic alliance model is used, the easier it will become.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement?

That is a given. It is the Unitarian way to have open communications and is core to the way we operate. Our role is to facilitate the energy of our movement and its members, and that means a throbbing current of multi-directional communication.

Describe yourself in one word: Positive.



Philip Colfox

Joan Cook

Age: 59

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: St. Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh

How long have you been a Unitarian? 30yrs+

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

I should like to see recent work, initiatives and developments, as well as nascent projects, progressed, and built on, I think I would be able to make a positive contribution.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

Member of; current EC, management committee Elderly Day Centre, Leader Locality Health Visiting Team. Experience on Church Council (Convenor), School Governor, President SUA. My experience working with distant and isolated Churches has given me an understanding of the difficulties these congregations face, and the possible impact of decisions for them.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

I should like to see increased use of the 'link', this role provides the ideal conduit for the 'two-way' communication which would dispel anxieties, enable communities to feel more involved in decision making, as well as being kept informed of the direction the EC is taking.

What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

The current EC has trimmed, rationalised, and streamlined, but if we value this movement we need to fund it; we cannot rely on 'dead' monies, contributions we make to our Churches and the GA need to be increased, and amongst other things, we need to look at a *realistic* quota!

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement? Communication is a two-way process, and I would like to see congregations make greater use of the 'link' person. The EC has increased the information put out via denominational publications, Uni-News etc., and there is no reason why anyone who wishes to, cannot contact any member of the EC directly.

Describe yourself in one word: Committed!



Joan Cook – incumbent

EC Candidates

David E Gillman

Age: 61

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: The Great Meeting House, Coventry

How long have you been a Unitarian? 35 years

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

I believe that my extensive interdenominational involvement in the specialist field of identifying and counteracting survival impediments faced by small, vulnerable congregations equips me for constructive EC service.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

Throughout the last 42 years I have progressively acquired hands-on experience (including negotiating skills) to integrate theory with practice with ecclesiastical professionals and external consultants as circumstances have required. I have also honoured the imperative for confidentiality and diplomacy. I have always proceeded with sensitivity and purpose.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

Our Movement's rich diversity of religious perspectives does not provide for an easy answer to this challenge, yet my belief in the future of the Movement will always be uppermost in my thoughts when seeking to reconcile new prospects and concepts with the realities of today's negativism.

What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

We need a human skills audit of the entire Movement, monitored at GA level, to enable Unitarians with appropriate skills in finance to come together as a specialist forum, preserving the closest liaison with all districts. This could then logically extend to a nationwide resources register.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement?

There need to be regular, face-to-face meetings between a designated district liaison officer and their nominated EC representative, working to GA-approved protocols. Having never before served on the EC, it would be inappropriate for me to comment in more depth at this stage.

Describe yourself in one word: Dedicated



David E Gillman

Robert Ince

Age: (not given – ed.)

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield

How long have you been a Unitarian? 15 years +

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

I believe this is the best way for me to serve the Unitarian movement. My experience of complex organisations inspiring people to work together seems ideally suited to this position.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

Currently:

- Acting Hon Treasurer and Executive Committee member.
- EC member of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee
- President: Sheffield and District Association
- Chairman: Fulwood Old Chapel

Before that, I spent my working life in international business travelling and coming to understand many different cultures and religions worldwide.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

I am conscious of the feeling that the changes in recent years have not had universal support, and as free thinking, independent Unitarians, we are naturally suspicious of those with authority. The EC is going to have to demonstrate its value more clearly and unite Unitarians with a shared purpose.

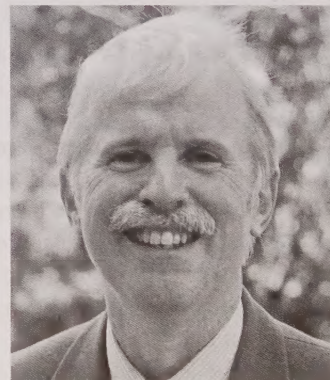
What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

The Movement is well-managed financially. So, if we want to spend more money, we will have to give more money. However, raising money is always easier if people are inspired by specific causes. We must find those causes that will inspire Unitarians and help those we need to help.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement?

We live in a world of rapidly increasing technology, so everybody's expectations of communication are increasing by the day. It is no longer good enough to communicate just a decision; people need to understand the options and the journey. We have all got to get a lot better at it!

Describe yourself in one word: Optimistic



Robert Ince – incumbent

EC Candidates

Louise Rogers

Age: 58

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: Newcastle-under-Lyme

How long have you been a Unitarian? 14 years affiliated to a local community

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

The U&FC community is a network not a hierarchy. We are being governed as if we were a hierarchy with the GA at the top. I bring a different approach.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

Over 25 years as a trustee on various boards. I work mentoring charity chief officers and boards on governance and business planning. I get things done, I'm patient and tenacious. I have a clear view of organisational structures and capabilities. I love organisational development. I love working with others.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

Include people. Engage with people. Do things cost-effectively. Be enamoured with our community and ensure that the EC is a humble partner working with others to make things happen.

What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

Sound financial management and planning.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement? (50 words)

Communication is two-way and should be an on-going process. We need participation and not just communication. EC members are trustees of the General Assembly, not of British Unitarianism. The EC needs to work in partnership with others to co-create our present and our future.

Describe yourself in one word: Effective



Louise Rogers

Jacqueline Woodman

Age: 45

Unitarian church/fellowship membership: Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society

How long have you been a Unitarian? 4 years

Why would you like to be a member of the Executive Committee (EC)?

I believe that I can make a contribution to the Unitarian movement on a national level through active promotion of an interfaith agenda and building bridges across diverse communities.

What is your most relevant previous experience and what particular strengths/skills would you bring?

I work in the NHS and understand how good organisational support leads to positive outcomes. I also bring with me managerial and educational skills from my role as an organiser in an undergraduate medical school programme and serve on other charitable committees that contribute to the overall well-being of society.

How would you counter negative perceptions within the movement of EC?

I would wish to define the breadth and depth of any negative perceptions within the EC and then apply proven managerial principles in tackling each aspect identified. Negative perceptions, real or perceived can be changed by establishing root causes and remedying them through an appropriate action plan.

What ideas do you have for ensuring the financial health of the movement in the long term?

The financial health of any movement depends on increasing both the number of active members as well as sympathisers to the cause. Financial success is not an isolated priority but should be seen as part of spiritual growth that follows on from the dynamism that new members bring.

What are your thoughts on more open communication between the EC and the larger movement?

A transparent and mature leadership engenders trust. I therefore believe that all the EC processes should be open to scrutiny and that robust debate should be encouraged. This can be done in a variety of mediums ranging from newsletters to blogs and including the widest diversity of people.

Describe yourself in one word: Enthusiastic



Jacqueline Woodman

Starting out with suds up to our elbows

In conversation with a friend, she and I discovered that, for years and years, whenever we went to any form of meeting or conference or society, we would each head for the washing-up bowl. We were also very unlikely to return to the society/conference/whatever unless we had managed to get hold of some form of job, usually by being asked to do it rather than by volunteering. I searched my memory and came up with the astounding insight that, unless it was directly connected with work, I never went anywhere to which I was not invited.

Now my friend and I are intelligent women and we clearly do not suffer from any form of behaviour pattern which would be embarrassing to others:

- i) People often ask us to perform jobs when we attend conferences, etc
- ii) People are quite willing to sit next to us on buses.
- iii) We have a number of friends.

Why are we so convinced that we would not be welcome in any gathering unless we take on some office or, at least, wash up? Why did it take me so long to realize that I never went anywhere, to Foy, to the GA, to whatever or wherever, unless someone asked me. I'm a Unitarian. I feel no compunction at all about marching into any Unitarian c/c/m (church/chapel/meeting house) but have had enormous difficulty in persuading myself to go to a Foy conference/the GA/UWG, etc and I have never yet made it to Hucklow for an experience week or summer school.

This is not an attempt to use this column for free psychotherapy or to gain sympathy. I was perfectly happy to think that I was a one-off with an unfortunate default setting marked "Not wanted on voyage". But finding another started me wondering if the mindset shared by Ingrid and myself is so unusual. There may be others who would gladly come to church/Foy/GA/UMS/UEW, etc if only they knew that their presence would be welcomed.

Do you remember my quoting to you from the United Reformed Church's Campaign of Radical Welcome?

'The 3 million UK adults, (identified by Tearfund* research), who are totally disconnected from the Church, but who would come if only someone invited them. This campaign issues that invitation.'

It is not enough for people like Ingrid and I to read a poster saying "Come to Upper Pocklington. All are Welcome." You have to say to us: "Why don't you come? I'm sure you'd like it." Perhaps we should spend less time advertising and more time inviting. I know some churches run a 'Bring a Friend Sunday'. If you have run one, does it work? Are there indeed lots of Dorothys and Ingrids out there?

'Wearing the Marigolds is a badge of office as prized as the President's chain and years have to be spent drying up with damp tea towels before you can aspire to be given access to a tap.'

Photo by Rachael Ball



Comment from a minister in an expanding church:

Some people find us through our website, but the majority of new people come because **they are invited to something by the existing members/attenders.**

And if there are, and you invite us in, please, please let us do the washing up. At least, initially. I know that in many c/c/ms the washing up is done by a senior group of ladies and that lesser beings are only grudgingly allowed to clear up and put away. Wearing the Marigolds is a badge of office as prized as the President's chain and years have to be spent drying up with damp tea towels before you can aspire to be given access to a tap. (And show that you do not dry plates and saucers ONE AT A TIME! The mark of the amateur.)

Please stop it. Making someone feel useful is one way of making them feel they belong. Of course, we won't make the sandwiches as perfectly as you do; of course, we won't fill the sugar bowls as beautifully as you do. But it is really depressing to be pushed to the edge by lots of busy and useful people and expected to wait patiently until someone deigns to come across and talk to you. I've usually gone home long before then.

Responses to this column are welcome. Yes, by you, I do mean you. I just can't remember your name. Please, write in now, Angela, Herbert, Thingy.

**Tearfund is a development organisation that works in partnership with churches.*

Dorothy Houghton is a worship leader in the Midlands.

Letters to the Editor

Pay attention to church-growth experts

To the Editor:

I read with interest John Pickering's piece in the 13 October *Inquirer* ('Why are we here, where are we going?'). He is right in saying that we need a sense of vision to guide and energise us. But I would like to add that we also need to pay attention to research. Often in these conversations in Unitarianism we remain wilfully ignorant of the piles of empirical research into what actually does make congregations grow and thrive. We are supposed to believe in science and reason, and yet we seem unwilling to pay attention to real research in this area and to make evidence-based decisions.

Growth will only come when this conversation moves beyond out pet theories, our ideas, our opinions, and we actually read some books about this stuff. The work has already been done for us. We simply need to absorb it and put it in to practice.

Stephen Lingwood

Minister

Bank Street Unitarian Chapel, Bolton

Build a network before the GA disappears

To the Editor:

There have been concerning communications of late regarding the ongoing viability of the central Unitarian General Assembly organisation. The fear of disintegration into an informal network, unsupported centrally (to paraphrase the Rev Andy Pakula (*Inquirer* 15 Sept) looms large. I do not concede that this is inevitable nor do I wish to detract from the very significant work done by the GA. Nevertheless this trajectory arguably has momentum and we should plan for this possibility.

Whilst unaware of the detail, I assume Congregational Development 2020 is part of such planning. However I hope that we will go further. Specifically, we need our stronger congregations (including any arising from 2020) to be extremely well linked (i.e. highly interdependent) so as to form the backbone of an emerging network. Furthermore, if paring back the GA becomes critical, we may have to figure out how to distribute many currently

central functions around such stronger congregations. We need to start this soon so we can go up the learning curve while the "centre" is strong enough to guide. Naturally I am aware of the irony of hoping the centre will cooperate in transitioning to a network. This is not least as I served on the Task Force that led to forming an Executive Committee and partly, and some will say naively, justified that centralisation through its possible use in speeding up the transition to a network whose spontaneous formation would take much longer.

Note that such a network-based model, which presents more responsibility to stronger congregations, would likely necessitate changes to national democratic processes post-transition. Despite there not being many positive alternatives, this is emphatically not a counsel of despair. There is opportunity in this crisis. Perhaps it could, in some respect, be likened to a congregation where the minister leaves and the members realize that it is 'do or die', and they step forward. Only maybe it is congregations as a whole that need to step forward.

Andy Phillips

Belper Unitarians

Retirement thanks from Cliff Reed

To the Editor:

May I, through *The Inquirer*, say thank-you to everyone in our Unitarian and Free Christian community who has sent cards, letters, and advice (!) on the occasion of my recent retirement. Your kind thoughts are deeply appreciated. I reflect with love, gratitude, and humility on 36 years as minister at the Ipswich and Framlingham Unitarian Meeting Houses, and as a minister within the wider national and international fellowship of our liberal faith.

Paulette and I have moved house, too (though not very far!), and we'd like to thank everyone who has sent us good wishes for this other big transition in our lives.

(Rev) Cliff Reed

Ipswich

HARRIS MANCHESTER COLLEGE CONFERENCE: MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN OUR CONGREGATIONS JUNE 2013

We are holding a Conference which, we hope, will appeal to all Ministers, Lay Pastors, Lay Leaders and Students for the Ministry from Monday June 24th to Wednesday, June 26th 2013. (Monday at 4.00 p.m. until Wednesday lunch). The cost will be £130, plus a small conference fee of £20.

This year our theme is "Mental Health Issues in our Congregations." Sessions will include such issues as mental health problems among our congregants, bullying in our congregations, and the mental health of our ministers. We choose to meet when the College is holding its end of term proceedings, which will include the annual meeting of honorary Governors and Friends on Tuesday afternoon and the valedictory service for new ministers.

Booking forms will be sent out in February to everyone on the ministerial roll. Please contact Jane Barraclough, preferably by email at the address below, if you want more details. A complete list of speakers will be released in the new year.

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36 years later, Cliff leaves Ipswich

By Andrew and Carol Gibbs

The Rev Cliff Reed arrived in Ipswich at the end of September 1976 having freshly graduated from Unitarian College Manchester. Initially, he had wanted his first ministry to be in London but there were no suitable ministerial vacancies at the time.

It was Ipswich-born Brian Golland, the denominational secretary at the time, whose father had been a minister there, who suggested the pulpit vacancy in Ipswich to Cliff. There had not been a permanent minister for some time and it was suggested that Cliff try it out for a couple of years. Gradually Cliff and his wife Paulette came to like Ipswich where they raised their two sons, Edmund and Stephen.

For 36 years Cliff has given a deep commitment and dedicated service to the Ipswich and Framlingham Meetings and nearly as many years to Bedfield Chapel. Cliff has become the second-longest serving minister in the history of the Ipswich congregation, founded about 1680. He also supported the development of the Unitarian Colchester Fellowship from 1998.

Cliff was President of the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches in 1997-1998. For 12 years he was a member of the General Assembly Interview Panel. He also served as Secretary of the ICUU (International Council of Unitarians and Universalists) 1995 to 1997 and then 'member at large' on the Executive Committee and subsequently member of the ICUU Nomination Committee.

Over the years, he has taken the Unitarian message to the local community by regularly giving a 'thought for the day' on



Cliff Reed cuts his cake.

BBC Radio Suffolk, writing articles and letters for the local press.

Cliff has also been a pillar of the local community. He was Chair of SI-FRE (Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource), formed in 1991, and is currently Honorary President. He has participated in and coordinated the Annual Inter-Faith Civic Celebration of Community Service for many years, a service initially held at the Meeting House.

Cliff's other commitments have been as Honorary Vice President of ISCRE (Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality), which started in 1977 and with CHARIS (Christian HIV & Aids Resource in Suffolk). He remains a trustee of Dr William's Library where he worked as a librarian before training for the ministry.

He is the author of many publications including 'We Are Here' (1992), 'The Way of the Pilgrim' (1993),

'Celebrating the Flame' (1997), 'Unitarian? What's That?' (1999), 'Spirit of Time & Place' (2002), 'Sacred Earth' (2010), and 'Till The Peoples All Are One' (2011).

Cliff's last service was Harvest Festival on Sunday, 30 September. People came from far and wide and the pews were packed. The atmosphere was charged with mixed emotions both happiness and sadness as Cliff delivered his final sermon 'Lesson From The Cornfield' as our minister.

Afterwards, time to share conversation with friends new and old over a finger buffet lunch. Glasses were filled and a toast made to Cliff wishing him a happy and healthy retirement.

Andrew and Carol Gibbs are members of Ipswich Unitarian Meeting.



At the end of Sunday Service on a very wet and windy day, lunch in Bury Unitarian Church church was followed by several intrepid members of the congregation driving to Holebottom, the church's former graveyard on the outskirts of Bury. The Celtic Cross still stands at the entrance. Some years ago the small chapel there was demolished and the graves grassed over, apart from the war graves. With a little help from Betty Kenyon, Joe Ashworth, Margaret Pollard, Molly Ratcliffe and June Clarke, Courtney, Tia and Ashley-Jade planted three trees; cherry, maple and crab apple. The Rev Beryl Allerton led a short dedication service. It is the intention to have a plaque commemorating the event of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

At harvest time, standing in the cornfields with his companions, Jesus liberated us from the inhuman tyranny of dogmatic and unreasonable religious rules, be they prescriptive or proscriptive, and instead told us that religion is there to enhance human life and serve human need. It is not about obeying the regulations laid down by a disapproving deity who wants to make life as unpleasant as possible; and still less is it about obeying the dictates of self-appointed arbiters of divine law, be they Pharisees or Sadducees, priests or ministers, mullahs or rabbis, or any other jumped-up religious functionary you may care to name.

– Cliff Reed

From his last sermon as minister at Ipswich 'Lessons from the Corn Field'